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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 005276

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [KJUS](#) [PINS](#) [CO](#) [OAS](#) [AUC](#)

SUBJECT: THE AUC PEACE PROCESS: AVOIDING ANOTHER CAGUAN

REF: BOGOTA 4951

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) In its negotiations with the paramilitaries the Uribe administration has avoided several mistakes the Pastrana administration committed during its fruitless peace process with the FARC. In contrast to talks with the FARC, the Uribe government has used public commentary sparingly and effectively, will maintain state control over concentration zones and limit their size, and will set concentration and demobilization deadlines. As paramilitary commanders and their bodyguards concentrate, the Peace Commissioner's Office, OAS Verification Commission, and security forces say they will focus on holding paramilitaries to the terms of their agreements, ensuring permanent state control over concentration zones, and moving forward with demobilization. Focusing on these priorities should prevent the paramilitary peace process from degenerating into a fiasco reminiscent of the Pastrana administration's "Caguan" process with the FARC.
End Summary.

Discretionary Public Statements

2. (C) The GOC prohibits public comments about internal negotiations. The May 13 agreement specifically states that neither the paramilitaries, GOC, or OAS verification mission will publicly disclose anything discussed during negotiations. This policy of confidentiality has prevented the paramilitary peace process from degenerating into the media circus that characterized the Pastrana administration's "Caguan" talks with the FARC.

State Control and Security

3. (C) According to the May 13 agreement, the zone in Cordoba Department where the ten key paramilitary commanders and their bodyguards will concentrate is less than 150 square miles. It will have a permanent presence of representatives from the OAS and Peace Commissioner's Office and should be small enough to permit effective state control. Restrepo has recently floated the idea of a slight reduction in the zone's size. It will be surrounded by a cordon of security forces who will control access to the area. Paramilitary commanders concentrated there will be held accountable for their troops' actions outside the zone. Restrepo has told the Ambassador that any future concentration/demobilization zones for paramilitary troops must be small enough to ensure full state control. According to OAS representative Sergio Caramagna, the GOC hopes to create five to seven concentration zones totaling no more than 460 square miles. In contrast, the FARC's safehaven ("despeje") in Caqueta and Meta departments was 16,200 square miles (roughly the size of Switzerland) and had no state presence.

An Agenda

4. (C) The GOC is pushing paramilitary commanders to concentrate in one month, and expects the concentration period to last six months. These deadlines, although flexible, should help to prevent talks from continuing indefinitely without concrete progress. The GOC will need to work quickly to define and agree on a demobilization schedule, which the paramilitaries have been avoiding.

Expected Next Steps and Clarifications

5. (C) In the next month:

-- Logistics: The Peace Commissioner's Office will prepare the zone for a permanent GOC presence. Paramilitary leaders will be responsible for their own food and shelter.

-- Verification: The OAS is developing a detailed budget

plan. Caramagna tentatively expects to spend approximately USD 500,000 for offices in Bogota, Medellin, and Monteria, capital of Cordoba. He hopes to expand his two-person team to seven international employees and several local hires (see septel for the possibility of U.S. support for the OAS mission).

-- Security: The Peace Commissioner's Office will coordinate with the Colombian Armed Forces to create a security cordon around the zone.

During the six month concentration period:

-- Regulation: Delegates from the Peace Commissioner's Office, paramilitaries, and OAS will form a Security and Co-existence Committee, which will regulate the zone and manage communications and visits. Local government officials and Catholic Church representatives will have an open invitation to serve as guest members of the Committee. The Peace Commissioner's Office must authorize any paramilitary leader's departure from the zone. The agreement has left ambiguous how often and for how long commanders will be permitted to leave the zone to "conduct activities related to the peace process" and how many commanders may be outside the zone at any given time. This needs to be clarified.

-- Verification: Assuming funding is available, the OAS mission will verify that all parties are fulfilling the agreement and maintain an inventory of all weapons possessed by the concentrated paramilitaries. Paramilitary leaders and their security details will be allowed to carry arms but cannot transport any weapons in or out of the zone. Delegates from the Peace Commissioner's Office, paramilitaries, and OAS will form a Verification Committee that will receive complaints about violations of the cease-fire nationwide and help the OAS verify the agreement. Restrepo has repeatedly asserted that individuals who violate the agreement and/or the cease-fire must be punished.

-- Security: The concentration zone is in paramilitary-dominated territory. The security forces will be responsible for preventing any other illegal armed group from making incursions into the area. More importantly, the security forces will seal off unauthorized access routes to the zone and conduct robust intelligence operations to record violations.

Post Concentration:

-- Demobilization: Restrepo hopes to concentrate/demobilize 5,000 paramilitaries this year. So far, paramilitary commanders have refused to do so until they receive guarantees against prison and extradition. Restrepo intends to press the paramilitaries to commit to and follow a detailed demobilization schedule.

-- Verification: As more concentration/demobilization zones are created, the OAS will have to rapidly expand its operation in order to monitor these areas.

-- Security: The paramilitaries have warned that the FARC will move into areas where paramilitaries currently have a presence if the paramilitaries demobilize. Restrepo states, however, that the paramilitaries are not necessary or wanted by the local population (reftel).

-- Legal processes: The "Law of Justice and Reparation" will not be considered until the next session of Congress, which begins on July 20. The GOC has repeatedly assured us that the peace process will not raise legal impediments to extradition.

WOOD